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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "THE JELLY CLINIC." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Now that the berry patch is beginning to yield more fruit than the family can eat--it's time to think of making the surplus into jelly or jam. And on through the summer there'll be currants--apples, plums--grapes, and other fruit that you'll want to convert into glasses of clear and sparkling jelly.

If the fruit is fresh and firm, and you make only small amounts of jelly at a time--the results are almost always good. But even the experienced jelly maker sometimes has a failure....or perhaps not a failure--just a batch of jelly that she labels "for Family Use ONLY."

Jelly that is soft and runny is sometimes a problem.... the kind that isn't really jelly at all--merely sirup. The fault may lie in the fruit itself--if it doesn't have the proper balance of pectin and acid. So it's best to use a mixture of ripe and slightly underripe fruit--to make sure that there is enough pectin and acid present.

When the fruit is low in acid--as overripe berries often are--this acid can easily be added in the form of lemon juice. Have the lemon juice strained and add it at the time you combine the sugar with the fruit juice. Or--if the sirup fails to form jelly--you can add lemon juice and boil the sirup again until it gives the jelly test. The usual amount is--one tablespoon of strained lemon juice to one cup of fruit juice.

When the fruit lacks pectin--you can add it in the form of commercial or homemade pectin extract. Fruits, such as strawberries and cherries, cannot be made into jelly without having pectin added.

But even if the fruit contains the right amount of pectin and acid--it may still fail to form jelly, if you use too much water in extracting the juice. This excess water dilutes the juice--so there isn't enough pectin, in proportion to the sugar that is added. Besides, it takes long cooking to evaporate this water--and the extra cooking may destroy some of the pectin.

And, of course, the jelly will be soft and runny if it's not cooked long enough. So it's a good idea to know exactly when the sirup gives a jelly test. A very simple test is the one called, "sheeting off." To make this test, you dip a large spoon into the boiling sirup. Then lift the spoon, so the sirup runs off the side. It's time to stop cooking when the sirup no longer runs off the spoon in a steady stream--but separates into two distinct lines of drops which "sheet" together.

The jelly test is also important in keeping the sirup from being overcooked. The sirup may form a gummy mass--instead of jelly--if it's cooked so long that the pectin is destroyed.

Another jelly trouble is cloudiness. Of course, cloudiness doesn't matter much if the jelly is for family use. But if you want clear jelly, it's easy enough to get it--by straining the fruit juice twice. For the bag use Canton flannel, with the nap side in--or two or three thicknesses of good quality cheese cloth--or a sugar bag. When you strain the juice the first time--let it drip, and then squeeze the bag. But for the second straining--use a fresh bag wrung out in hot water, and do not squeeze.

Crystals in jelly are gritty and unpleasant--but not at all harmful. They're usually the result of too much sugar in the sirup, or too little acid. Or they may form when the sirup is overcooked--or when the glasses stand around for some time before they're sealed.

But the crystals in grape jelly are another kind--cream of tarter crystals. You can prevent them, almost entirely, if you let the juice stand in a cold place

overnight--then dip the juice out of the container carefully--and restrain it before making it into jelly.

Now let's take up one last jelly trouble--mold or fermentation. To prevent mold or fermentation.....the glasses must be sterilized--the jelly must have a perfect paraffin seal--and the jelly must be stored in a cool, dry place.

In getting the glasses ready--wash them carefully. Then place them on a rack in a pan--cover them with cold water--and boil for 15 to 20 minutes. Keep the glasses in the hot water until you're ready to use them--then lift them out with a pair of tongs.

Here's the method for sealing jelly---recommended by the Bureau of Home Economics....Pour the hot sirup into the sterilized glasses--place tin covers on the glasses at once--and let the jelly set. When the jelly is firm--seal it by pouring hot paraffin on the top of each glass. And as an extra precaution--rotate the glass before the paraffin hardens. Then the paraffin will run up the rim and form a good seal. Wipe the covers and put them back on the glasses to keep the paraffin clean.

Storing the jelly--is the last step--but it's an important one. If the storage place is warm or damp--moisture may collect under the paraffin and break the seal. Then the organisms that cause spoilage can get in. So if you don't have a cool and dry storage place--it's best to make the containers airtight with rubber or composition gaskets.

That's all the time we have to talk about jelly making today. But if you'd like full directions for homemade jellies, jams, and preserves...write to the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. Ask for their free publication on jelly making, or call it by number. It's Farmers' Bulletin No. 1800.

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